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E. J. H. 1831

THE
ATONEMENT AND SACRAMENT
OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER

CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO
CERTAIN POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

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PREFACE.

WITH most people, belief in revelation is not the result of inquiry into the several evidences of its truth. Idleness, or indifference, or ignorance, or incapacity, shut them out from such a source of conviction. By *incapacity*, I do not mean so much a natural obtuseness of intellect, as a want of sufficient training and exercise of the mind to enable it to embrace a long chain of reasoning; and a want also of that habit of reposing in inferences from reasoning, which

is requisite for our complete and permanent satisfaction with them, even after their conclusiveness has, for the time, been seen and admitted. Many will owe their faith to *feeling*; to a sort of instinctive perception of the agreeableness of revealed religion to the sentiments and circumstances of man. The doctrine of a future state—and this a state of retribution—is in unison with the faculties and aspirations of the soul; and the moral lessons, which the Scriptures inculcate for our guidance, are at once felt to be suited to improve and perfect our nature, and promote its real happiness. This conformity between the doctrines of revelation and the nature of man, suggests to the heart of the unprejudiced a secret persuasion, that the Author of man's nature is the Author of revelation. But it is the natural

consequence of deriving belief in revelation from such a source only, that those parts of it which do not thus address themselves to the common feelings of man, or which have not obvious relation to his nature, are more difficultly received, or obtain a less hearty assent. Such are the *positive* ordinances enjoined in Scripture, as *the sacraments*; and the doctrine of the *atonement by Christ*. The former wanting, by supposition, an immediate and recognised moral character, must be received simply upon the authority of God, who ordained them: or else, their moral value must be sought in more indirect tendencies than strike the mind of ordinary observers. The latter (the mode of atonement) being founded on motives which it has not pleased the Deity to reveal, and which have respect to the

nature of the Deity, rather than to that of man ; finds no sufficient testimony to its propriety in the natural sentiments of man. Hence, with people who owe their faith much to *feeling*, there will commonly be found to exist some difficulty respecting the doctrine of the atonement ; and an insufficient sense of the obligation and value of the sacraments. It is the object of the present little work to facilitate to such people the cordial reception of these important parts of Christian doctrine and institutions ; by strengthening their general belief in revelation ; by exposing the unreasonableness of giving an unequal assent to doctrines resting upon one common authority ; by removing difficulties in the way of the doctrine of the atonement in particular ; and by shewing that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (which

alone the Author had immediately in view) is, in fact, instituted with a high moral aim ; one intimately connected with the improvement and happiness of man.

It may be well to say a few words in excuse of the colloquial and familiar style and language employed.

What is here presented to the public, was not only not written for publication, but, originally, not *written* at all. It was addressed by the author to a friend in conversation, with a view to preparation for receiving the Sacrament, for the first time. Finding it desirable, from the length to which he had been drawn, to go over the ground again, he committed what he had said to writing, lest any thing important should escape him on repetition. Having been lately encouraged to publish what he had thus

put together, he has thought it better not to make material change in his language, or addition to his matter; since he considers himself as addressing principally those, to whom the simple and summary nature of his statement will constitute its chief value.

The author lays no claim to original views. On such a subject, indeed, they are little to be desired. His only hope is to have combined received opinions and arguments in a somewhat novel form, so as to meet the wants of a particular class of Christians.

THE
ATONEMENT AND SACRAMENT
OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER
CONSIDERED.

PEOPLE talk with respect to Christianity as if they expected conviction to strike them, like a flash of lightning, as they sit idle in their chair, without thought or enquiry. What they call difficulties, are difficulties of ignorance. It is as absurd to expect the truth of Revelation to make thus its own way to the understanding, without investigation on our part, as the truth of any matter of science, or of history. The proofs of the Divine origin of the Christian religion rest upon history and upon reasonings on the nature of man, and his connec-

tion with the Deity. Yet because people do not, without adverting to these points, perceive its truth, they say it is difficult; and then make of this very difficulty, an argument against it; or, at least an excuse for disbelieving it, or neglecting it.

Again; people take for granted they have *natural* religion. Yet the fact is, they have as little of this as they have of Christianity. Ask them, indeed, if they believe the existence of a God, and that He is the Creator of the world, and of man; they reply unhesitatingly, perhaps angrily, Yes. And they certainly do not *doubt* upon these points. But neither do they *believe*. They have nothing but a vague feeling; no real conviction; no conviction founded upon enquiry and reflection; such as would enable them to receive at once any necessary consequence of those truths, because following from them. Still less have they any *practical* belief of them.

Their belief has no influence upon their lives ; is mixed up with none of their daily thoughts, or feelings, or conduct. Natural religion would require, as well as revealed, deep and frequent reflection upon the nature of God, and upon our relations to him ; an habitual sense of our dependence upon Him, and of his concern about us ; prayer, love, adoration. Is this the state of mind and feeling in those who find difficulty in the reception of Christianity ? Is it with this preparation they take up the consideration of it ? I allude even to fair, well-intentioned people. Far from it. They think little of God at all, and still less of Him, as of a *real* agent, ministering every moment to their preservation ; an object of daily reverence. What they receive from Him, they receive in common with others. They receive it, seemingly, whether they ask for it or not ; whether grateful, or regardless of his bounty. That

which fluctuates ; the more or less ; the object, therefore, of hope and fear ; which stimulates industry and suggests caution ; which calls forth and occupies the energies and passions of men ; seems to depend on themselves or their fellow-creatures. To their fellows, therefore, and to the little circumstances and results of their intercourse with them, all their attention and care are devoted. They come, with their minds full of the petty transactions and objects connected with human relations ; of the ordinary concerns of daily life ; with ideas of nothing but dress, rank, money, traffic, pleasure ; and take up at once the question of a message from God ; of the appearance of the Son of God in the human form ; of his death in this form for the reconciliation of man to God. Is it strange that, with no previous impression upon their minds in the slightest degree similar ; with no idea of the nature of God, or of man ;

still less of the enmity between them ; with no step or gradation ; the mind should be unable to rise at once to the reception of propositions so sublime ? Whatever is totally new and strange to the mind ; entirely out of the range of its habitual ideas ; finds a difficult admission to it. And where a truth is the consequence of other truths, it cannot be perceived without a previous acquaintance with them. We take up the consideration of religion, just as if we should open a book of science in the middle, and expect to understand it, without the slightest knowledge of the previous matter, or even of the meaning of the terms employed. The probability of a message being sent from God to man, must depend on their respective natures, and previous relation. What the mind wants, then, before it can be in a state to judge fairly of this probability, is, an intimate sense of man's creation and present preserva-

tion by God. And it is from the absence of this, that the great difficulty arises. To judge of an act, asserted to be an act of God, we require some previous knowledge of his nature and other acts.

Were we told that the Emperor of China had sent us a message involving some great good to us, we should reject the intelligence as absurd. But were he our Father ; had we been nursed by his care, and were we still cherished by his bounty ; we should embrace the message as true, at once ; or, after the slightest proof of its authenticity. Were, again, all this relation to him real, but the knowledge of it, from some partial failure of understanding, obliterated from the memory, so that a total unconsciousness of it had supervened ; our impression then, respecting such message, would be the same as if this relation had no existence : we should discredit the messenger ; all our feel-

ings would be opposed to his veracity ; we should neglect the message, and disregard the benefit held out to us in it. But were there any means of curing our disordered intellect ; of recalling our right reason and knowledge : then, in proportion as the reality of our relation to the Emperor, and the remembrance of all his parental love, opened upon our minds ; we should in the same degree be prepared to admit the probability of the message ; it would gradually appear natural ; be welcomed as a further proof of long-experienced love ; we should dutifully and thankfully comply with its injunctions, and patiently and confidently expect the promised good.

The latter case is evidently analogous to our position with respect to God. We are children of God, unconscious of the relation. We were created by him ; we are sustained by him ; but we have forgotten these

benefits. We live and feel, *practically*, as the children of our own power. When, therefore, we hear of a message from God, we find difficulty in believing it. What is wanted to make it appear credible, is reflection on our dependence upon Him ; that it is really his bounty by which we are nurtured. An intimate persuasion of this will make it appear any thing but improbable, that when our *moral* wants were great ; our inability to fulfil the ends of our being, complete ; our great and good Parent should interfere to supply our wants, and facilitate our accomplishment of the happiness he originally designed for us, and ever wished us to attain.

Think, then, long and often, how man originated. Did he exist from all eternity ? If not, who made him ? Who made the world ? Who the animals and herbs by which man is sustained ? Who their *fitness* for his nourishment ? When man was made, had he power

of himself to continue life? Does he himself supply the secret principle of vitality? Is there not a *great cause* extrinsic to him, as necessary, every moment, for the preservation of life in each individual, and for the continuance of the species, as for the production of it in each, and in our first parents? If the arm of God be withheld for an instant, are we not dissolved in death? Who produces the seasons and all the circumstances on which the sustenance of man depends? Does man make the corn or the beasts to grow or to multiply? He does little more than reach out his arm and take them. Yet with his own little agency alone is he occupied. He thinks not at all of Him who is employed in all these grand operations. If the mind be convinced, not merely for this moment to forget the next, but *thoroughly* convinced, and imbued with all these considerations, and with correspondent feelings; if it be

habitually and practically sensible of man's connection with and dependence upon God ; that God has unceasingly a concern and agency in the life of man ; that is, in a word, if the mind has *natural religion* ; will it be prepared to reject at once ; will it find any longer an insuperable difficulty in believing a further instance of that concern ? If we are really and intimately conscious of the instrumentality of God in the daily support of our *animal* life ; can we think it impossible ; improbable ; that he should have any care of our *moral, spiritual* life ? If God cares for our body, is it surprising that He should care for our soul ? Would it not be more strange that He should care for the one, and be indifferent to the other ; care for that which is mean and material ; be indifferent to that which is lofty and spiritual, congenial with his own nature ? If he daily supplies the means of continuing life, is it impro-

bable that he should supply, when wanted, the means of accomplishing the object for which life was given? There is every appearance of man's being a *responsible* being, inasmuch as he has a perception of right and wrong, and is capable of improving it by reflection and practice; and a *progressive* being, for he seems not to accomplish here *all* that his faculties were provided for. Unlike other animals, whose present existence appears to furnish a complete object for all their powers, to man alone his present being looks but preparatory, instrumental, subsidiary to something further. Can it, then, be likely that God, who made man a being thus responsible, and improveable to some further end, should sustain his existence, but withhold the knowledge of the purposes for which he sustains it, when, without that knowledge, they cannot be accomplished?

¹ It is reasonable to suppose that the knowledge of these ulterior purposes was imparted to man at his creation. There are traces of it every where in the history of man. But it was of a perishable nature. It was intrusted to man, as a moral agent, to remember or to forget, to improve or to neglect. It was upon his conduct in this respect that his subsequent fate was to depend. The *means* of living were provided with certainty and regularity. But knowledge of the great *ends* of life, and of the *means*

¹ The injunction given to our first parent to abstain from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, constituted his life a scene of discipline. And the threat of liability to death, upon his disobedience, implied a freedom from it, *i. e.* eternal life, upon his compliance. We are not of course to suppose that this was all the instruction given to the first man as to the nature and ends of his being. The brief history of the creation and fall only contains a few of the most essential particulars. But much of what is here asserted may, with great probability, be inferred even from these limited details.

by which they were to be promoted, was left to his own care. In consequence it was soon forgotten. These ends were founded upon his relation to God. He soon ceased to think of this relation, and of God, the object of it. He became involved in ignorance and sin. But *God* remained *the same*. He was still the Creator of man, still his preserver. His hand was still employed in giving breath to man, in perpetuating the race, in ministering to the individual. He continued to endow him with vital energy, and to provide the outward means of sustenance. Yet while man continued thus to take breath and food daily from God¹, he was with-

¹ One cause of difficulty in the reception of Revelation, is, perhaps, that we do not sufficiently advert to the necessity of it. We judge respecting the want of it by the knowledge derived from it. It is difficult to divest ourselves of what has been familiar to us from our infancy, so that it seems almost innate in us; and to place ourselves in the situation of the heathen, to whom the Christian Revelation was first imparted.

out the power of accomplishing any useful purpose of existence. He lived, as the beasts, only to perish. Can it be thought wonderful that God, who gave life to man, should, in these circumstances, interfere to renew that lost knowledge of the object of life, without which that object could not be attained? Is it more surprising that God should give knowledge, than that He should give food? one being as necessary to the end proposed, as the other; as suitable¹ also to the rational faculties of man, as the other to his corporeal. If,

What human reason could accomplish, by its own powers, they had effected. Yet what was their religious knowledge? Worse than ignorance; absurdity of every kind. We judge of the necessity of a revelation, just as if a man should estimate the importance of food, under a sensation of satiety, almost to disgust, and totally forgetful of that of hunger. He would differ somewhat in opinion on this point, from one half-famished.

¹ Knowledge is as much the *food* of the rational and moral faculties, that by which they expand and grow, as meat is of the body. Now the existence of an *appetite* in the soul for religious knowledge, is seen in

then, it be not unlikely, seeing God's care every moment about man to preserve his life and faculties; that He would, when necessary, meet his *moral* exigencies, supply the knowledge necessary for accomplishing the great end for which He gave that life and those faculties; let us see what those exigencies were.

Man was sinful—had become negligent of his duties to God and to his fellow-creatures, and even, in a great degree, ignorant of them; ignorant also of the future existence awaiting him.

1. He wanted, then, the means of reconciliation to God.

2. He wanted instruction in his duties to God and to his fellow-creatures.

3. He wanted that more certain knowledge of his future existence and

the universal prevalence of some mode of religion. It was the suitable *food* for this appetite that was wanted.

of the connection between his happiness in it, and his present conduct, which should supply a motive for the discharge of these duties.

4. He wanted increased power to discharge them.

Does the message said to have been sent from God meet these wants ?

It does.

Then there is, at least, no antecedent improbability of its having proceeded from God, since it is seen to be not improbable that God should send a message, and this message contains what, did it proceed from God, it might be expected to contain.

We see, then, that there is no improbability that such a message should come from God to man. But this is not enough. We admit that it *might*; we require proof that it *did*.

Now, what is the nature of the proof to be expected ? Before we complain of its insufficiency, let us

consider what we had reason to look for. What is the mode in which God ordinarily deals with man? What is his instrument of persuasion to the adoption of what is good for him, of instruction in his duty, in the concerns of *this* life?—His understanding. God lays sufficient evidence before this faculty, and leaves to man to consider it or overlook it; to listen to it or disregard it; at his pleasure, but also at his cost. God does not *force* man to know his own *present* good, or to choose it. Upon man's voluntary attention and selection depends much of his present welfare. In the case of this message, there is no reason to suppose God would depart from this plan. Whatever considerations induce us to think God would supply irresistible evidence in the one case, apply equally to the other, where he certainly does not supply it. What we should expect, then, is, that he would address him-

self to man's reason, and lay before it evidence sufficient to convince, if properly examined and considered. Perhaps as the fact of a new and direct message from God is not of ordinary experience, we should reasonably expect that the evidence would be stronger than in ordinary occurrences; but still that it would be evidence addressed to the *understanding*, requiring its honest exercise, and not superseding or overpowering it.

Now what is the evidence we have?

First, the coming of the messenger was prophesied during a space of some hundreds of years (not merely by one person, or at one period), by several individuals of high authority and credit at the time; and at the time believed by the people who heard them, to be the immediate, inspired agents of God. Their words were committed to writing, and preserved with religious care, by the very nation of which the greater part even-

tually rejected the Person whose advent and history were predicted, and which could not, therefore, be suspected of falsifying the predictions in his favour. The hopes of the nation were built upon these prophecies; its fortitude under adversity sustained by their confidence in them. Moreover, by a singular fortune¹, they were translated into the Greek language long before their fulfilment, and circulated among the learned heathen, who were ignorant, for the most part, of the religion and hopes of this people. And a vague, but general expectation of the appearance, at this time, of some extraordinary person, arose among them in consequence.

This is a species of evidence proving unquestionably Divine interfer-

¹ We may not yet call it "*Divine arrangement*," since that would be to beg the question.

ence, and suited to an extraordinary occasion.

Next, we might suppose that if God were to send a person to declare His will¹ to man, He would impart to such person some power of proving his authority ; since² no one could be believed, on his own bare word, to be a messenger from God. He would be empowered to do something beyond the natural gifts of man, *i. e.* to work miracles. The coming of a mes-

¹ We might expect also that the object for which God would thus interfere, would be important. It was so, and it was accomplished. Compare the religious knowledge of the Christian world with that of the Pagan, *now*, or prior to the coming of our Saviour.

² This was felt by Moses, when he said to God, "Behold when I come to the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say unto me, what is his name ; what shall I say unto them ?" (Exod. xiii. 3.) What he required in this expostulation, was, some verification of his powers. And we know what kind of verification they subsequently received—the power of working miracles.

senger from God being itself a miracle, a fact out of the circle of human experience, the evidence of it must necessarily be of the same character. The power of working miracles was, then, to be expected as one of the evidences God would furnish to his ambassador.

It was provided.

But if this power was provided, its exercise must have excited astonishment, attention, belief ; in a word, have been accompanied with great and lasting effects.

It did excite all this ; was so accompanied. The religion of the world was changed ; of the civilized world ; by persuasion ; by mean instruments, as to outward circumstances ; against the opposition of authority, and learning, and popular prejudices. The habits, civil, religious, and moral, of the converts, underwent a striking change ; no easy task, as present experience teaches us : and they sub-

mitted to disgrace, tortures, death, for *bearing witness to the miracles they had seen*; not merely for *fond opinions* they had embraced. In a word, the success of the religion was proportioned to miraculous powers, and is only to be accounted for by them—would be a miracle¹ itself greater than any asserted, without them.

This is a second species of evidence, proving Divine interposition, and suited to an extraordinary occasion.

It has been already stated that the message sent contains what man was in want of from his Maker; what, in man's circumstances, a wise and good Creator might be expected to impart to him.

This is a third species of evidence.

¹ For a contradiction to all experience, in any thing depending upon the *moral* properties of man, is as unaccountable by known causes; would imply as much a preter-natural origin; as a contradiction to experience in mere *physical* results.

What proof could we have looked for, that we have not ?—None.

The Revelation then is Divine ; is from God.

¹ Hence, whatever is taught in it is the teaching of God. It should be enough, therefore, that any doctrine is clearly asserted in it, to ensure our instant, unhesitating, confiding acquiescence. Yet we sift and select. What we see and approve the motives of, or fancy so, we receive. What

¹ The *authenticity of the Scriptures*; the fact that they contain the history and doctrines of the religion, is proved by frequent quotations from them in the writings of the early enemies as well as friends to the religion ; by the respect paid to them from the very beginning, and the appeals made to them on *both* sides, as authority, in all controversies between different sects of Christians ; by the total absence of any other account of so extraordinary a phenomenon as the total change of the religion of the civilized world ; and by the impossibility of fabrication, or material corruption of the text, seeing that the books were circulated among different nations, translated into a variety of languages, and in the hands and daily use of people bitterly opposed to each other in their interpretation of them.

we do not comprehend the reasons for, we hesitate about, and even venture to reject.

Do we act reasonably in this? Have we proper ground, in the sufficiency of our understanding, to decide upon what is, and what cannot be, the proceeding of God?

Let us consider what sort of doctrines we are disposed, for the most part, to believe, and what to doubt; and try if we can discover the cause of this different reception of truths, resting on a common authority.

The doctrines we¹ acquiesce in are, chiefly, those which regard our own nature; such as, that man is a moral and responsible agent; that he is destined to a future existence; that his happiness or misery in that existence will depend upon his conduct here; that holiness is the end at which he is to aim; that this is the perfection of

¹ I speak of things revealed.

his nature, and what will fit him for the existence which awaits him ; that it consists in temperance, soberness, and chastity, in the government of himself ; justice and benevolence towards his fellow-creatures ; piety and obedience towards God, whom he knows to be his Creator and Preserver ; and repentance when he has offended Him. All these obligations spring out of *our* nature and its relations. And as we are acquainted with our own nature, we are enabled to discover their fitness to our present and future happiness. We are satisfied. We have no doubt. The *fact* of redemption we should have no doubt about. We perceive our duty : we know we have failed in it : we are conscious that we must have offended our Creator, who imposed that duty ; that we deserve punishment ; that we require reconciliation.

But the *manner*—the atonement¹ by

¹ "Atonement," is defined by Hey to be, "an act

Christ : here we stumble : we see not its suitableness. Suppose we do not ; is this a just ground of difficulty ? Is it upon *our* nature that its suitableness depends ? No ; it is upon the nature of *God*. It is *He* that is angry ; it is *He* that is to be appeased. It is to *Him* that the mode of reconciliation is to be acceptable. It is *His* nature that is to be satisfied. Do we perfectly know His nature ? Are we fully acquainted with it, as with our own, so as to have a prompt and certain perception of what is suitable, what repugnant to it ? Do we know *all* God's feelings and motives ? Do we see them in daily action ? Do we know, again, *the whole* of his creation ? every link and chain in it¹ ? what

which God is pleased to accept in lieu of punishment." v. iii. 296. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say, "atonement is literally reconciliation," or "the act which reconciles."

¹ Our intercourse is limited to the inhabitants of the little speck in Creation on which we live. Reason might surmise the existence of other beings ; of some

influence His treatment of man may have upon other orders of beings? Do we know the whole circumstances

link between man and God. We are taught that there is *one* such link, at least. We know of angels; and we know their liability to sin. We can *imagine*, therefore, the usefulness of an example of God's displeasure against sin; of some proof of the difficulty of appeasing Him; without pretending to lay down this as the real motive of God. It might even have an ill effect upon ourselves, were we forgiven simply, without cost, or sacrifice for us. Even the great price which God has exacted, does not seem to make us *over-sensible* to the danger of sin, and to its hatefulness in the sight of God. We are too apt to fancy Him easy; almost indifferent to it. But whether for us, or for other beings, the Scriptures intimate that the object of Christ's death was, in some measure, to set forth God's *righteousness*; his love of good and hatred of evil; which might have been questioned under a gratuitous pardon, a pardon without atonement. "Whom God hath set forth (says St. Paul) to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His *righteousness*; that He might be *just*, and (yet) the *justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*. (Rom. iii. 25.)

The law had annexed punishment to transgression, in the person of the offender. In the Gospel, God retains the punishment, but permits Christ voluntarily to bear it on our behalf. Thus the law is not made void by Christ, but fulfilled.

and counsels of God? No, little or nothing; nothing but what He has revealed to us; and that does not bear upon this matter. He has simply imparted to us the fact of His accepting the death of Christ, as a means of our reconciliation with Him. Why do we then doubt? If we do not know his nature, so as to be able to judge with any certainty how, or with what it is affected, (except in what relates to our own conduct), nor the circumstances which recommend this mode to Him; is there any reason to be surprised that we do not see its fitness? We do not see that it would fit *our* nature. Yet even this might be, perhaps, if we were circumstanced as God is. But suppose not; may not God's nature differ in any thing from ours?

When we know the nature of any animal, we reject at once what is told of it contrary to that nature. Thus, we refer to the class of fables the

story of horses feeding upon human flesh. But if we are unacquainted with the propensities of the animal treated of, we feel little disposition to doubt, upon any proper testimony, even though its asserted habits vary somewhat from received analogies. Why do we not deal thus rationally with respect to God? Why do we not reflect how insufficient our knowledge of His nature is to enable us to judge with confidence, which of many modes of doing a thing, *credible itself, called for and desired by us*, may recommend itself to Him? how ignorant we are of His position with respect to other beings, which position may constitute the eligibility of this very measure? that it is no reason for its being ineligible to Him, that it is felt to be so to us? It may be answered, indeed, that our notion of the Divine nature is obtained much from selecting and refining the best properties of man; and that it is natural, there-

fore, to judge, in some degree, of God by ourselves. But this must be always done with much modesty and caution. The different circumstances alone in which God is placed, must modify His attributes, and combine them differently in His nature and in that of man. We are here walking in much darkness, and should welcome any light He condescends to hold out to us. Especially since we see many things relating to ourselves in this life which we admit to be by the permission of God, which equally shock our notions of Him; so as to prove our incapacity for judging, with certainty and safety, of what is agreeable to His nature.

Perhaps it would not be too much to say, that, considering how imperfectly we are acquainted with the nature of God, and His relations to other orders of beings, it would have been strange if, in a revelation of His will, and a dispensation of pardon and

grace to man, there had been nothing unaccountable to man's reason ; nothing, I mean, in those parts which have direct and exclusive connection with God's nature, and possibly a reference to His other relations ; as, more especially, in the particular mode of reconciliation selected. It would have looked like the invention of man, if every thing of this kind had jumped exactly with his notions, and had been suited to his different nature and circumstances, feelings and motives.

At any rate, the fitness to our nature of the dispensations revealed respecting it, which we are better qualified to appreciate, should dispose our minds to a ready acquiescence in the particulars revealed, which respect, or are founded upon, the nature of God, of the suitableness of which to His nature we have neither powers nor experience to enable us to judge. We should infer that the difficulty

arises from our ignorance, since, *so far as we can see, what we see seems right.*

The great difficulty which many people find, is this of the *atonement* by *Christ*. They do not see how God could find any satisfaction in the death of Christ for man; why He could not have forgiven us at once, upon our repentance¹.

¹ They who reject the doctrine of the *atonement*, rely upon *repentance* as a sufficient inducement to God to pardon us. I know not how their minds are constituted. For my own part, with the firm persuasion that pardon is brought within the reach of all men, by an act totally extrinsic to them—by the death of Christ—but that repentance is necessary to make this act available to myself; with this more limited task for my repentance, I feel but too little confidence; too little for my security and comfort; that it will yet be accomplished. But whence this confidence in the efficacy of repentance? We shall see that it is not from Scripture; that salvation is there ascribed to another cause. Is it from nature? from the known dealings of God with us? No. The consequences of our faults cling to us here in spite of contrition; cling to us often for the whole remnant of life; though we have repented and discontinued

Now it is obvious that all that we have been urging has a direct bearing

our faults, and amended the disposition in which they originated.

Pœnituit facti ;

Sed non idcirco flammæ atque incendia vires

Indomitas posuère.

The mischief sticks to us, and is aggravated by our sense of the folly which incurred it.

Appeal may be made by those who rely upon repentance, to the many passages in the Old Testament, where forgiveness is promised upon this condition. But it should be remembered that these refer only to the *temporal* consequences of sin, and that even here compliance with the expiatory ceremonies of the law was enjoined or implied, and that these involved *sacrifice*.

Man has sinned. Reason and experience, as well as revelation, teach him that the Deity cannot regard innocence and guilt alike. Some distinction unfavourable to sin—some penal consequences—must ensue. How is he to escape them? *Reason* does not teach us that repentance has any efficacy to this end. Still less does experience. Whence does the notion come to us? From revelation. Repentance is there spoken of as pleasing to the Deity. But if we take thus much from revelation, upon what principle do we *stop* here? Revelation does not stop here. It teaches us something more to this same point. It describes repentance as only availing by virtue of the *death of Christ*, and through faith in his atonement.

upon this absurd hesitation. We are judging of the fitness of a mode of action to a nature which we know but imperfectly, and to circumstances of which we know *nothing*. It may be unsuited to *our* nature and position. But that is not the thing to be judged of. This is, the suitableness of it to the nature and circumstances of *God*. Why will we be so blind as to allow in ourselves a feeling thus unfounded upon any rational basis? If God had imparted to us a precise knowledge of His nature and circumstances, we might expect to perceive the suitability of His choice; the propriety of the selected mode of pardoning man. As it is, we cannot.

But we might expect, since people allow this difficulty to have weight with them, that at least the mode of proceeding should be totally unlike all that we experience of God's appointments *here*; that in all the circumstances of our *present* life, there

should be no instance in which the voluntary sufferings of one person are permitted to save another from them ; no case of vicarious *evil*. For be it remembered that it is not a case of vicarious *displeasure*. Christ does not become an object ¹ of *displeasure* to God on our account. God is not *angry* with Him for our sin ; only permits Him to take for us certain consequences of our sins ; to undergo suffering, that we may escape it.

How much of human life is made up of such obligations ! Look at what a parent voluntarily undergoes for a child ² ; one friend for another ; and

¹ So far from it, our Saviour asserts that this His merciful interposition to save us by His suffering, made Him an object of increased favour in the sight of God. " Therefore doth the Father *love* me, *because* I lay down my life." John x. 17.

² Some have given themselves to slavery ; many incurred certain death in battle ; very many the *probable risk* of it, in a thousand ways, to save a friend, or even without such previous tie ; to say nothing of the instances where a *public* benefit has been the motive.

this often in the way of saving the other from the consequences of his faults; at the cost of much voluntary labour, pain, and privation. And since these things arise properly out of the constitution of man's nature and present circumstances, they must be permissible by God, who is the author of that nature, and of our present circumstances and relations.

History is not without examples, more strictly analogous, of friends substituting themselves for *punishment*, in the place of those they loved. And

It is, in fact, a common impulse, and is regarded as a high and generous virtue. And since man is framed by God, a disposition in him to suffer, in order to avert evil or procure good for another, and the internal approbation felt of such a disposition, prove the agreement of such disposition with the nature of the Deity who implanted it, as well as his express provision for the exercise of it, in the ordinary circumstances of man, which give occasion to it, and require it.

The apostle's assertion, that "peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die," (Rom. v. 7.) is derived from observation of human nature.

there is in these cases, a gratification¹ to a fine nature, in being the instrument of good, which gives a tone of exultation to its feelings, even under a sense of suffering, and makes it rise superior to pain. And if this be true, the offence is discountenanced, while yet benevolence is gratified.

It is not my object to *account for* the particular mode of reconciliation selected by God, but only to show, that there is nothing in it contradictory to our experience of the ways of Providence, or to the natural feelings of man ; nothing therefore that should properly create a difficulty to our reason, in receiving it as a measure agreeable to the Divine nature. For this purpose we may appeal to the sin-

¹ This is asserted of our Saviour. " He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be *satisfied* ;" Isa. xliii. 11. The result of his sufferings shall render them grateful to him. Again, " Who for the *joy* that was set before him, *endured the cross, despising the shame.*" Heb. xii. 2.

offerings and expiatory sacrifices of the Jewish ritual. Either these were, as we are taught, the express institution of God, and were ordained to prefigure¹ to the mind, and familiarize it with the very doctrine which we are discussing; in which case the compatibility of the great sacrifice they

¹ Speaking of the priests offering sacrifice under the law, St. Paul says, "Who serve unto the *example and shadow* of heavenly things," (i. e. of the priesthood exercised by our Saviour in heaven, continually pleading the sacrifice made by Himself, on our behalf, as described in the preceding verses.) Heb. viii. 5.

Again, chap. x. 1. "The law having a *shadow* of good things to come, &c. can never with those sacrifices," (the *shadows* of the great one now come.)

Again, Coloss. ii. 16. "Let no man judge you in meat or drink, (in respect to the rites of the Mosaic law), &c. which are a *shadow* of things to come, but the *body* is of Christ."

Again, "It was necessary the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, (the *blood of animals sacrificed*); but the heavenly things themselves with *better sacrifices than these*. For Christ, &c." Heb. ix. 23.

Again, "Sacrifices and burnt-offerings thou wouldest not, but a *body* hast thou prepared me, (to be the *real sacrifice*, which these only set forth.)" Heb. x. 5. from Psalm xl. 6. 8.

shadow forth with the nature of God, is admitted : or, if they be of human invention, then it must be allowed that the notion of vicarious suffering for sin is not repugnant to the feelings or reason of man. In fact, in¹ all nations, ages, and religions, something of sacrifice has obtained, with the view of averting Divine displeasure. And the same reasoning holds with respect to this usage among the heathens. Either it has been purely man's device, in which case something congenial in it to man's understanding must be allowed : or, (to which opinion I incline) it is every where the remnant of early revelation ; in which

¹ Even *human* sacrifices have been resorted to—those offered to Moloch, Deut. xii. 31 ; Ps. cvi. 37. Also that of his *son* by the king of Moab, 2 Kings iii. 27. And though in these cases, and in sacrifices generally, the parallel with the atonement by Christ fails in the point of *consent on the part of the victim* ; yet they all serve to prove a deep-rooted impression in the human mind, that the Deity will accept a substituted sufferer, an atonement other than in the person of the offender.

case it is the appointment of God, which is all that we need contend for. And I the rather hold to this opinion, because I own it does not seem to me, that this idea of sacrifice, as a means of conciliating the Supreme Power, would naturally suggest and recommend itself to the human mind. It may not be foreign to the purpose to remark, that since the asserted sacrifice of our Saviour for the sins of man, which, it is argued, the other sacrifices were intended to typify, these have gone much into disuse; having, it should seem, fulfilled their object.

But another difficulty is urged. We do not see any *natural connection between the cause and effect*; between the remedy and cure; between the death of Christ and man's reconciliation with God.

This difficulty is met by the former argument, that we know not the nature of the Deity who is to be ap-

peased, sufficiently to entitle us to expect, as a matter of course, to discern wherein the efficacy of any measure to appease him consists.

But, do we see this connection in the means He has appointed of preserving the *present* life and the end? Even in the article of food? But take the seemingly nearer analogy of *medicine*. I am sick to death. There lies a piece of rhubarb, or opium, or what not. If I take it, I live; if I omit to do so, I die. Our *present* life is of *some* importance in the sight of God, since He gave it, and made so large provision for it. Yet, in this crisis, it depends on a substance perfectly extrinsic, and, to mere reason, perfectly unconnected with it. Who, before experience, would not pronounce it improbable that God should allow such a result to depend on such means? Yet we see that, in so judging, we should be mistaken. And yet we venture to determine, before experience, the im-

probability of a thing not at all more surprising than this. For there is at least as much connection between our eternal life and the vicarious sufferings of Christ, as between our present life and a piece of rhubarb. The same Being who uses, in the one case, instruments of good, to us so seemingly unfit, so seemingly useless, (for to us it would appear easier and more natural that God should preserve our life at once, without the medicine, or should have prevented the sickness,) may surely have selected for the purpose of giving us *eternal* life, of healing the disease of sin in the soul, an instrument of which we do not discern the fitness.

Well, then, we at length see it to be absurd in man to make any question about the mode by which God has thought fit to be reconciled to him. The propriety of it depends on the nature of God, which we know but imperfectly ; and possibly on His

position with respect to other orders of creatures, of which we know nothing. And of His nature, what we know from His present appointments makes it not unlikely that He should avert evil, or confer good upon us, through the sufferings of another; and that He should use means of which we do not perceive the suitability. *But is there good proof that the mode asserted of his reconciliation with man, is the one selected by Him?*

Look to the Scriptures, and it is impossible, if these unfounded prejudices against the doctrine be thoroughly removed from your mind, that you should not be convinced. It is the doctrine most frequently insisted on; ¹ represented in strong language

¹ "I delivered to you *first of all*, how that *Christ died for our sins.*" 1 Cor. xv. 3.

Again, Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, *through faith in his blood.*"

The belief of this doctrine, then, must be the basis of your hope of salvation.

as primary and fundamental; and proved to be so by the multiplicity and urgency of the passages in which it is enforced. It rests not, like some doctrines, still properly received, upon single or few texts, but is interwoven into the whole body of Scripture. To take this out would be to separate the gold from a tissue; to make a bare and tangled texture; to destroy the character of the whole, and leave loose and unconnected shreds. It is the very basis of the dispensation. All rests upon it. If you take this away, you can have no reason to believe any thing that remains.

But to descend to particulars.

The doctrine asserted is, *that the benefit of eternal salvation, obtained for man by Christ, is obtained by His death; that, for motives with which we are unacquainted, God has been pleased to accept the life of His Son, in lieu of the punishment due to the sins of mankind; that every one who is finally saved, will*

be saved in consequence of this event ; by virtue of it.

It is to be shewn, then, by reference to the Scriptures, that, under whatever name the blessings conferred by Christ on mankind, are represented ; whether salvation, redemption, ransom, pardon, reconciliation, justification ; they are uniformly ascribed to *His death* ; not to His instruction or example, but to *His death*. This instruction and example are set forth as means by which each man is to appropriate and make available to himself the blessings tendered to all, by virtue of His death ; but *His death* it is which purchases the blessings.

Matt. xx. 28. Even as the Son of Man came to give *His life* a ransom for many.

Ib. xxvi. 28. This is my *blood* of the New Testament which is *shed for you*, and for many, for *the remission of sins*.

Mark x. 45. Same words as above,
Matt. xx. 28.

Ib. xiv. 24. This is my *blood* of the New Testament, *which is shed for many.*

Luke xxii. 19. This is my *body* which is *given* for you. (In what sense His *body* was *given* for us, is seen below, *John iii. 14* and *16.*)

Ib. 20. This cup is the New Testament in my *blood*, which is *shed for you.* (To what end it was shed is seen above, *Matt. xxvi. 28.*)

John iii. 14. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be *lifted up* (upon the cross) *that whosoever believeth on Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* (He was *lifted up—put to death—*on the cross, to procure everlasting life for us. *This* was the means.)

Ib. 16. God so loved the world, that he *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not

perish, but have *everlasting life*. (The preceding passage in which the same object is ascribed to the crucifixion of our Saviour, explains in what sense God *gave* His Son—viz. gave Him *to death*.)

Ib. i. 29. Behold the *Lamb* of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

And again, 36. Here the allusion is to the Lamb offered in sacrifices. And as there the victim was *slain* to procure the benefit, so it must be necessarily intended here.

Ib. vi. 51. The bread which I shall give is my *flesh*, (or body) which I shall *give for the life of the world*.

Ib. x. 2. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd *giveth His life* for the sheep. (In what sense He *gave* His *life* for them, is seen before, chap. iii. 16.)

Ib. xv. 13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay *down his life for his friends*, (which our Saviour

here intimates *He* was about to do. For He was exhorting them to love one another, as *He* loved *them*, and adds these words as a proof and measure of His love for them.)

Acts xx. 28. Feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with *His own blood*.

Rom. iii. 25. Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation*, through *faith in His blood*—(in the efficacy of His blood—of His blood-shedding—of His death. These words connect the *justification* and *redemption* spoken of in the preceding part of the sentence, with the *death of Christ*, as their cause : and also shew that when “*faith*” is insisted on as necessary to salvation on the part of man, it is *faith in the blood* or *death* of Christ, as the *means* by which it is obtained for us.)

Ib. v. 6. When we were yet without strength, in due time, *Christ died for* the ungodly.

Ib. 8. God commendeth His love to-

wards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us.*

Ib. v. 9.—being now *justified by His blood*, we shall be *saved from wrath* through Him.

Ib. 10.—when we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God by *the death* of His Son, &c. (And these words explain the following verse : “ We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom* we have now received the atonement ;” *i. e.* *by His death.*)

Ib. vi. 10. In that He died, *He died unto sin*, once—(died on account of sin—of *our sin.*)

Ib. viii. 32. He that *spared not His own Son*, but *delivered Him up* (to death) *for us all*, how, &c.

1 Cor. v. 7. Christ, our Passover, *is sacrificed* for us.

Ib. viii. 11. And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, *for whom Christ died?* (The same expression is found *Rom.* xiv. 15.)

Ib. xv. 3. I delivered unto you

first of all — how that *Christ died for our sins*, according to the Scriptures; (*i. e.* as had been foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament.)

Galat. i. 4. Who gave *Himself (His life, as is seen from other passages) for our sins.*

Ib. iii. 13. Christ hath *redeemed us* from the curse of the law, being *made a curse* for us (*i. e. being crucified* for us, as the Apostle proceeds to explain; “for it is written¹, *cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*”—is crucified.)

Ephes. i. 7. In whom we have *redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

Ib. ii. 13. Ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh *by the blood of Christ.*

Ib. 16. That He might *reconcile both to God, in one body, by the cross.*

Coloss. i. 14. In whom we have *re-*

¹ Deut. xxi. 23.

demption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, (as above Ephes. i. 7.)

Coloss. i. 20. Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.

Ib. 21. You that were sometimes alienated — now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death. (The frequent mention of *death* and *the cross*, as the means of reconciliation, proves that a literal sense is to be given to these expressions of “redemption through His blood,” and “His body given.” They cannot, unless in any particular instance where the context requires it, be referred, in the way of metaphor, to His *doctrines*; since the “*cross*” and “*death*” admit of no such interpretation.)

Ib. ii. 14. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; (i. e. removed the con-

demnation to which we are subject by the law, *by His crucifixion.*)

1 *Tim.* ii. 6. Who gave *Himself* (to death) *a ransom* for all.

Tit. ii. 14. Who gave *Himself* for us (to death) that He might *redeem us from all iniquity.*

Hebrews. This whole Epistle, nearly, is to our purpose. The Apostle in it draws a parallel between the character and offices of our Saviour, and those persons and rites of the Mosaic law, by which He was prefigured. He is more particularly compared to the *sacrificial victims*, by whose *death* the anger of God was to be appeased, or benefit to be obtained from Him to the worshippers. In allusion to this resemblance, He says;

Heb. ix. 22. Almost all things are by the law purged with *blood*, and without *shedding of blood* is *no remission.*

Ib. ix. 26. Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to *put away sin* by the *sacrifice of Himself.*

Ib. 28. So Christ was once *offered* (as a victim) *to bear the sins of many.*

Ib. x. The Apostle begins this chapter by asserting the inefficacy of the Jewish sacrifices to take away sins; (v. 4.) “for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins:” and then, by the application of a prophecy to our Saviour, proves that *He* was the *real, available victim*, provided for this end. “¹ Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a *body* hast thou prepared *me* (*viz.* that *I* might be offered).

Ib. 10. And then he concludes his argument in the following words: “By the which will *we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.*”

Ib. 12. And again, “This man, after He had offered *one sacrifice for sins*, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.”

¹ Psalm xl. 6—8.

As a conclusion from all these premises, the Apostle thus exhorts his converts :

*Heb. x. 19*¹. “ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to *enter into the Holiest* by the *blood of Jesus*, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, *His flesh* ;” &c.

Ib. 26. If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth *no more sacrifice*

¹ The general sense of the passage is, that, as the High Priest, purified by the blood of the victim, was permitted to enter the “ Holy of Holies ;” the immediate seat of Divine Presence : so we, cleansed by the *blood of Jesus*, have access to the presence of God ; are permitted to aspire to eternal happiness in his presence, in Heaven. The apostle then changes his metaphor, and compares our Saviour to the veil, or screen, which hung before the “ Holy of Holies,” and through which, when he was purified, the Priest entered. His meaning is simply, that as the way to the “ Holy of Holies,” was through the veil ; so the way to Heaven is through Christ. (As *John* xiv. 6. I am *the way*, &c.—no man cometh unto the Father but *by me*.)

for sins¹—(implying that there had been *one* ; viz. that of Christ.)

Ib. 29.—hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the *blood of the covenant*² (Christ's blood) wherewith he (the sinner so offending) was sanctified, (made clean, and fit for the presence of God,) an unholy thing.

Ib. xiii. 12. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people *with His own blood*, &c.

1 *Pet.* i. 2. Unto obedience and sprinkling *of the blood of Jesus Christ* (by which, as by the blood of the victims, ye are purified³.)

Ib. 18. —ye were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, &c. &c., but

¹ This indirect allusion to the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ for sin, as well known and familiar to the minds of his hearers, and relied upon by them, is perhaps to the full as forcible as a more explicit assertion of it.

² The remark in the above note may apply here also.

³ See *Levit.* xiv. 14.

with the *precious blood of Christ*, as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot. (The sacrificial offerings were required to be thus perfect, doubtless, as fit types of Him.)

1 *Pet.* ii. 24. Who His own self *bare our sins in His own body, on the tree.* (Can any thing be more explicit?)

Ib. iii. 18. For Christ also hath once *suffered for sins*, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being *put to death in the flesh*, but quickened in the Spirit.

Ib. iv. 1. Forasmuch then as Christ hath *suffered for us in the flesh.*

1 *John* i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

Rev. vii. 14. These are they which, &c. . . . and have washed their robes and made them white, *in the blood of the Lamb.*

It being thus indisputably proved

that the advantages obtained for us by our Saviour are obtained through His death, a number of passages alluding to them, but not expressly stating this meritorious cause, are made still to bear upon it, and to shew, by their number, the *extreme importance* of the doctrine.

Thus, *St. Matt.* i. 21. Thou shalt call His name *Jesus*, for He shall *save His people from their sins*. (This was so peculiarly the object of His mission, as to make it a proper foundation for the name by which He was to be distinguished.)

Matt. xviii. 11. and *Luke* xix. 10. For the Son of Man is come to *save* that which was lost.

Luke i. 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and *redeemed* His people, and hath *raised up an horn of salvation* for us.

John iii. 17. God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world,

but that the world *through Him* might be *saved*.

Acts iv. 12. There is none other name under heaven given among men, *whereby* we must be *saved*.

Ib. xv. 11. We believe that *through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ* we shall be *saved*.

Rom. vi. 23. The gift of God is *eternal life*; (how?) *through Jesus Christ* our Lord.

Ephes. iv. 32.—even as God, *for Christ's sake*, hath *forgiven you*.

Galat. iv. 4. God sent forth His Son . . . to *redeem* them that were under the law.

2 Cor. v. 19. God was *in Christ* *reconciling the world* to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

1 John ii. 2. He is the *propitiation* for our sins, (through faith in His blood. See *Rom.* iii. 25.)

Ib. iv. 9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because

that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might *live through Him*.

Ib. 10.—sent His Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins. (How? See above, ii. 2.)

Ib. v. 11. God hath *given to us eternal life*, and this life *is in His Son*.

See also 1 *Tim.* i. 15, 2 *Tim.* i. 9, and *passim*.

If we seek the meaning of our Saviour and of His apostles in these their words, and not in our own unauthorized imaginations, it is impossible to deny that to the *death of Christ*, all the blessed consequences of His appearance in the flesh are strictly limited. In what manner, and from what motives, the death of Christ recommends itself to God, as the meritorious cause of man's salvation, is not intimated. It is wiser, therefore, for man not to attempt to penetrate this mystery, by

mere surmises of his own. It is enough for us to know certainly that there *is* a meritorious cause, by which salvation is assured to us, and that this cause is the *sufferings and death, on our behalf, of Christ the Son of God*. And of this truth we have now seen abundant proof in the multiplied passages cited from the Scriptures.

But this is not all. This doctrine is made the *subject of Prophecy*. And it is the *only* doctrine which our Saviour was to impart to us, which is thus anticipated. The time and manner of His birth ; His origin ; the circumstances and manner of His life, death, and burial ; were foretold, to establish His identity and divine authority. Thus much was necessary to this end. The knowledge also of the blessing he was to procure for mankind was requisite, as a source of hope and comfort to those who heard the prophecies, or who preceded their fulfilment. But the *mode* by which

He was to procure them, and the points upon which He was to instruct and enlighten mankind, might have been left to Himself to announce. The latter were so left; but the former was *specifically foretold*. And thus we have for this doctrine an authority which we are without for every other of the New Testament. It rests not on the authority of Christ and His apostles. It has the previous testimony of God, speaking through the mouth of His prophets. “¹He was *wounded for our transgressions*, He was *bruised for our iniquities*; the *chastisement of our peace was upon Him*, and with *His stripes we are healed*. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath *laid on Him* the iniquity of us all².”

¹ Isaiah liii. 5, 6.

² St. Paul distinctly asserts, that the death of Christ was foretold in the Old Testament, and was a principal subject of His own preaching. “I con-

Again, "when¹ thou shalt make His *soul* (life) *an offering for sin*." And again: "He² shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath *poured out His soul unto death*: and *He was numbered with the transgressors*: and *He bare the sin of many*." The passage already quoted (*Psalm xl. 6. 8.*) is used by St. Paul (*Heb. x. 5.*) as referring to our Saviour, which it indeed obviously does; and it is a clear intimation of this doctrine: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (to be the real, availing sacrifice.)

But besides these verbal declara-

tinue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the *prophets and Moses did say should come*, that Christ *should suffer*, and that He should be the first that should *rise from the dead*"—(His *death*, therefore, was the suffering intended; *Acts xxvi. 22*); again, (*1 Cor. xv. 3.* already quoted)—"I delivered unto you first of all . . . how that Christ died for our sins, *according to the Scriptures*;" i.e. as the Scriptures foretold.

¹ *Is. liii. 10.*

² *Ib. 12.*

tions, there was the still more formal and systematic prophecy of *emblematical action*. The whole system of the Jewish ritual; their numerous sacrifices of expiation and atonement; were (as the apostle expressly asserts) ordained to prepare the way for this great sin-offering. This has been already alluded to. Their intrinsic inefficacy marks but the more, the importance of that great sacrifice they were to shadow forth. That for which the mind of man was to be prepared by a cumbrous ritual, through a long succession of ages, must be of high and primary import to man. And if it be true, ¹ as we have seen reason to suppose, that the *heathen* sacrifices were but the corrupted tradition of an early revelation, they all bear testimony to the same truth ².

¹ See p. 40.

² The scene at Gethsemane seems inexplicable, but on the supposition that some great event like the salvation of man was dependent on the death of

Surely, then, all this proves *the doctrine of the atonement true*; and not only true, but, what from its very nature it must be, if true, *the very fundamental doctrine of our religion*; that, *without it there is no Christianity*.

This being the case, we might, not unreasonably, expect that the attention of Christians would be pointedly

Christ, and that it was only to be accomplished by this means. It should seem also, that not mere bodily suffering, but also some oppressive mental agony, was temporarily entailed by His bearing the sins of mankind. For as the time of His trial approached, He confessed that "His¹ soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," almost to the extinction of its natural powers. And He now prayed that "if it were possible," (if the blessed event of man's redemption were attainable by other means) "this cup might pass from Him." But, as if recollecting Himself, and remembering the high ends which had called for His voluntary humiliation, He immediately adds, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." What *common* obligation would have prevented our Saviour from persevering in this prayer, that the suffering before Him might be averted? Had it been consistent with the purpose of His mission, why should He think it unbecoming to persevere in the request of this indulgence from God?

¹ See Matt. xxvi. and Luke xxii.

directed to it; that a doctrine thus important and essential, would be made to stand out, as it were, in bold relief, in the picture and presentment of Christianity; would be impressed upon us in some peculiar mode; by some special and significant rite be forced continually upon the notice and feelings of mankind: that as the creation of the world and of man was commemorated by the sanctification of the seventh day; so the no less important circumstance of man's redemption would be kept constantly before his eyes, and not be left to be overlooked through his negligence and forgetfulness. Such is the fact. Our Saviour Himself; He who by his death paid our ransom; who knew therefore all its importance; that by it alone, and through faith in it, we can hope for heaven; how needful, therefore, that we should ever bear it in our minds; He, in His last moments of undisturbed intercourse with His

apostles ; when the event was now at hand, and His words were sure to sink deeply into their hearts ; *He* expressly enjoined these commissioned teachers of His word to *commemorate for ever His death* by a simple, but touching and striking ceremony ; to *break bread and pour out wine*, in remembrance of His body broken and blood poured out for their salvation, and that of all mankind. “ *When* ¹ *He had given thanks He brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me.* After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood ; *this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*” This great event, the proof of man’s guilt, the motive for repentance, the foundation of hope, the spur to obedience and

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 24.

gratitude, was to be for ever kept before the eyes of men by a representative rite. And ¹ we read the interpretation of the command in the conduct of those who received it. *The institution of the Lord's Supper became at once a badge of Christianity,*

¹ " And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and *in breaking of bread*, and in prayers." Acts ii. 42.

" And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and *breaking bread*," &c. Ibid. 46. The brevity of allusion to the ceremony in the term *breaking bread*, marks its perfect notoriety, as already a customary Christian solemnity.

In fact, this rite is itself a very valuable testimony to the Christian religion. It has existed, beyond contradiction, from the very time asserted ; and is unaccounted for, and unaccountable, on any other supposition than the truth of the facts which it commemorates. It has existed too, unquestionably, as a rite *representing the sacrifice of Christ*. This is seen from the passage in St. Paul denouncing those who eat and drink without "*discerning the Lord's body*:" and also from the very slander subsequently cast upon the Christians by their enemies. One of these was, that they *sacrificed a child* in this rite, and drank the blood. This is just the interpretation natural from an enemy, of an undisputed truth, imperfectly understood ; *the representation of a sacrifice* in the ceremony.

and has been handed down uninterruptedly to this day. With variety in the details, which were not prescribed, the rite itself has been universal. Having then, the express commandment of Christ for this institution, and the immediate example of the apostles, and of all the early Christians, followed by the imitation of all ages ; can it be thought a matter of indifference, whether we comply or not ? Is it for us to choose, whether or no we will fulfil an express commandment of God ; of our Saviour ?

Can any commandment be more suitable ? If it be God's gracious purpose to reconcile us to Himself by the death of His Son, and through faith in His blood ; can any thing be more illustrative of His wisdom and goodness, knowing as He does the thoughtless nature of man, his forgetfulness of any distant good ; than to rouse his attention and keep it fixed to this event, by an imposing and significant ceremony ?

¹ We must always bear in mind that the commandments of God are founded upon, have reference to, *the nature of man*; that the propriety of them is to be sought in their tendency to our good; that they are suited to the perfect wisdom of God, not merely as being *abstractedly* fitted to please Him, but as being *apt instruments to shape us to the great ends He proposes for us*. Now every one who has thought at all upon man's nature, knows his tendency to forget, even as an object of thought, still more as a motive of action, whatever is not brought frequently before his mind by something external to it. Hence

¹ This view of the *usefulness* to man of the laws of God, cannot be too frequently present to our minds. For, however we may yield a speculative assent to it, our feelings are practically at variance with it. We *feel and act* with respect to the laws of God, as we do with respect to the taxes imposed by earthly governments; not as having a direct interest to obey them, but as *necessary evils*, which we only submit to when we must, and which we consider it so much gain to evade, where we think we can with safety.

the importance of most public rites ; hence, in some degree, that of the public worship of God. Who doubts that, but for the institution of the Sabbath, God Himself would be forgotten, even by the few who now think at all of Him? For, of those who do think of Him, how few, but on the Sabbath! But to go out of religion for examples. What has been the object of all periodical *civil* ceremonies, commemorative of great transactions? of anniversaries? What, but to keep alive the useful remembrance of circumstances, which, but for these, however important to them the remembrance, men would be apt to lose from their memory.

Now, if Christ came to save man by His death ; if we are reconciled to God, “in the body of His flesh, through death¹ ;” then *His death* is the basis of our religion ; the very foundation of our hope of salvation. If “ God hath

¹ Coloss. i. 21.

set Him forth to be a propitiation through *faith in His blood*¹ ;” then the *shedding of His blood* is the great event to be ever before our minds, ever in our hearts. It should occupy our thoughts, govern our feelings, influence our conduct, inspire our faith, leaven the whole lump of Christian life.

But, to give it this hold upon us, some external memorial, something to revive attention and feeling, is necessary. However well-informed of our duty, and even of our interests, if they are at all remote, we require to be continually reminded of them. How wise then, as well as merciful ; how fitted to our nature ; how adapted to its wants ; how calculated to promote in the heart of the Christian the influence of his religion ; to work in him the abiding faith and holy practice necessary to qualify him for salvation, is this institution of the Lord’s

¹ Rom. iii. 25.

Supper, to commemorate the death of his Saviour! Who can innocently refuse to partake of it? Who has the death of Christ, and all his own consequent obligations, so adequately impressed on his heart, that he dare be satisfied with what he is; and not only this, but feel confident of remaining thus, without further care, to the end of his life? To whom is this rite needless? Who, even were he thus perfectly and fixedly a Christian, could innocently reject the command of his dying Saviour; of his Saviour dying to save him? Is not the very disinclination to obey Him, a proof of his insufficient sense of his obligations to Him? And who that is not all this, can safely reject the means selected by the wisdom and mercy of God to render him so? They, it is in fact, who most need to observe this ceremony; who are not yet really Christians; who are lukewarm and incomplete; who have sins they will not

abandon, pleasures with which a near access to Christ would interfere; they, it is, who most fear to come to the close contemplation of His death. Wretched delusion! They feel that they are condemned, and will not come to Him to be saved. They are conscious that their present habits make them unfit to appear before Christ, even here; and can have no reasonable hope to do so hereafter. Yet they proceed. They must think of their condition, if they come to the altar of their Saviour; they must be made sensible of their danger; unquiet in their sinful enjoyments. And they shrink from present disturbance, reckless of future consequences: as if to forget danger, were to avoid it—thinking of danger, created it. To such, however, it is vain to address my present remarks. They require a call of a louder kind. These reasonings are rather for the timid, who, through misapprehension, fear; for the thought-

less, who overlook ; and for the ignorant, who know not the meaning and importance of this sacred and valuable institution.

To these, it may be hoped, it is now made evident, *that the Lord's Supper is ordained by Him, who died for us, to commemorate his death for our salvation ; that it is ordained for our good ; because the continual remembrance of his death is necessary to our obtaining the benefits of it.*

But there is something peculiar in the *manner* of commemoration. The ceremony is a *Sacrament*¹ ; i. e. the par-

¹ The Homilies define a sacrament to be " any thing whereby a *holy thing* is signified."

Our Catechism says, a sacrament is " an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us." We are not to understand *grace* here, in the sense now often put upon it, of *spiritual inspiration*. The expression would be, in this case, tautology and nonsense. The meaning in which it was often used by the Reformers and composers of our Liturgy is simply, " a favour or benefit freely given" (*gratia—gratis.*) Spiritual grace, therefore, means a good relating to the " spirit" or " soul"—the immaterial part of man—as distinguished from *corporeal* or *phy-*

ticalars of it have a resemblance to—
are intended to represent—those of
the religious event commemorated.
The bread represents the body of our

sical good. The Catechism would therefore teach us, that the sacraments of the Church are *signs of a benefit obtained for the soul*, or immortal part of man. In the sacrament of baptism the benefit is the purifying the soul from sin, by reception into Christ's Church, of which washing by water is the *sign*. In that of the Lord's Supper it is *the pardon of sin by the death of Christ*. Hence the twenty-eighth article of the Church of England says, "the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death:" and the nineteenth article explains the word "sacrament" to mean "sign."

The Catechism proceeds, "ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." That is, this rite is ordained by Christ, as a means whereby we may receive that remission of sin, and a pledge to assure us of it. In other words, the sign is to declare both our acceptance of the benefit, and God's promise to confer it. Balguy (from whom I am here quoting) afterwards says, "I consider the sign as *declaratory* only, not *efficient* of the benefit represented by it."

One of the benefits to be expected from the sacraments, as being one great privilege of Christianity, is certainly the aid of the Holy Spirit: only it is not to be understood as specifically alluded to in the sacramental services, or pledged in Scripture to a participation in them. See Balguy's seventh Charge, p. 297—304.

Saviour; the breaking of it, the wounding of His body upon the cross. The wine represents His blood; the pouring it out, the shedding of His blood. The eating and drinking the bread and wine represent our participation in the redemption wrought by the death of Christ. Not that there is a resemblance¹ between this act, and this participation in redemption; but that there is a resemblance between this act, and that which, in the Jewish sacrifices, implied a share in the benefits annexed to, or expected from the sacrifice.

This is what is intended by the word "*sacrament*." It means a sign or imitation of some holy thing. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, therefore, means, "*a religious feast*

¹ The act of eating bread, by which life is sustained to the body, may not be altogether without resemblance to—may not inaptly represent—the imparting life to the soul by that which the bread represents—the bruised body of Christ. This comparison is further alluded to in a subsequent note, p. 93.

imitating or representing, in its circumstances, the SACRIFICE of the death of Christ, and the redemption which we obtain by virtue of that sacrifice." And the object of the representation is, as has been before stated, to *commemorate* the sacrifice of Christ, and this its consequence—to keep them ever alive in our minds.

But it will be asked, whence do we obtain these particulars? The words of institution by our Saviour are few and simple, and seem not to embrace such detail.

True. But the occasion which He selected for instituting this ceremony, was one of the great Jewish sacrifices. The materials He used were provided for the purpose of this solemnity: the words He employs have reference to it. Their true force and purport is, therefore, to be elicited by a consideration of those circumstances in this Jewish solemnity, which Christ seems to have had in mind, and which His

hearers, the apostles, would readily apply, being familiar with them ¹. Let us see what they were.

But first, a few words upon the Jewish sacrifices in general.

It has already been observed, that the sacrifices of the Mosaic law were intended to prefigure that of our Saviour. They doubtless, at the same time, answered an *immediate* purpose. They kept alive in the offerers a sense of religion ; of the existence of a su-

¹ It may not be useless to remark that, as all the usages and circumstances of the several Jewish sacrifices were familiar to the apostles, a few words in allusion to them would accurately convey an extensive meaning. Hence the brevity used by our Saviour. A long explanation is necessary to make the same thing intelligible *to us*, to whom sacrifices are strange. We have first to study the subject of *sacrifices*, and never can, after all, be upon the footing of Christ's first hearers, as regards *natural* capacities for understanding Him ; independently of their *inspired* powers. On this, therefore, as on many occasions, the views and conduct of the apostles, either as discovered in their writings, or in institutions clearly established by them, will be valuable aids in the interpretation of Scripture. We, perhaps, too much neglect *tradition*—the early history of the Church—in interpreting the sacred writings.

preme moral Governor of the world ; of their connection with, and dependence upon Him ; of the obedience due to Him ; of their violation of it ; of the offence thus given to Him ; of the punishment incurred by them ; of the necessity of being reconciled to Him ; of the want of some means of reconciliation. But while the Jewish sacrifices were wisely adapted to this *immediate* end, they served the further and higher purpose of preparing the Jews for the doctrine of final reconciliation with God, *by the death of His Son*. Now, though we clearly perceive the usefulness at all times of some outward observances, to keep alive the attention of mankind to religion ; yet there would seem to us no sufficient propriety in the selection of this particular mode, by *sacrifice*, unless for this ulterior object. But if God had from the beginning acquiesced in the death of his Son, as the fittest, or only fit method of reconciling Himself to

mankind ; then the peculiar usefulness and wisdom of a sacrificial system is at once clear to reason. Accordingly we find it pervading the whole Mosaic ritual. Whenever the object of religious intercourse with the Deity had any resemblance to the effects wrought for us by the death of Christ ; then the mode of intercourse was by sacrifice. If sin was to be atoned for, of the individual or of the nation ; if good to be solicited, or evil deprecated ; if deliverance to be acknowledged ; a victim was slain to these ends. If a covenant with God was to be ratified ; if pollution to be cleansed ; it was by the sprinkling of the blood of the offering. Hence St. Paul asserts, that “¹almost all things are by the law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” And this, be it remembered, was prescribed, not by man’s inven-

¹ Heb. ix. 22.

tion, but by the ordinance of God. And whence the fitness of these institutions? They had in themselves no tendency to work the end proposed. It was declared by the prophet, before it was affirmed by the apostle, that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins¹." Their fitness was found in their resemblance to the great sacrifice of Christ, by which this and other blessings are obtained for man. And it is itself a strong confirmation of the doctrine of Christ's death-being the instrument of man's salvation, that it gives meaning and propriety to the whole sacrificial system of the Mosaic law; which, without it, seems to want the character of divine wisdom, from which it undoubtedly proceeded. It is Christ who makes the *real atonement*; it is He who reconciles us to God, who averts punishment, impetrates mercy,

¹ Micah vi. 6. 8. Heb. x. 4.

ratifies the great covenant, cleanses from impurity, fitteth for the "Holy of holies," the presence of God. And He effects all this by *his death* for us. He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"¹—the victim destined to die for man, ere man himself had become subject to death. Hence the analogy between the death of Christ and that of the sacrificial victims is not fortuitous and fanciful, but premeditated and strict. The sacrifices of the law were instituted expressly to prefigure that of Christ; were, to this end, formed after it as a pattern; and therefore now serve to illustrate it. Our Saviour's words, then, appointing a religious feast in commemoration of His sacrifice, having direct² allusion to the customs of the Jewish sacrifices; the true and full extent of

¹ Rev. xiii. 8.

² "This do." What were they doing?—feasting upon a sacrifice.

"This is my blood of the *New Testament*"—an allusion to the blood of the *Old*.

His meaning is only to be ascertained by reference to them.

Now it was upon the occasion of one of these sacrifices ; one to which His own has been expressly¹ and pointedly compared ; that our Saviour instituted the solemnity in question. It was at the feast of *the Passover* ; a feast commemorative of the double deliverance of the Jewish nation ; events aptly representing and shadowing forth the greater salvation from more than Egyptian bondage to sin, and from death its penalty, which He was about to accomplish for mankind. The occasion selected, as well as the words employed, mark a direct allusion by our Saviour to this and other Jewish solemnities. And hence, as has been already observed, we enlarge and interpret His meaning, with safety and certainty, by a reference to those solemnities. Let us,

¹ "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." 1 Cor. v. 7.

then, go through the brief history of the transaction, with this comparison in our minds.

It is to be remembered, that our Saviour and His apostles were assembled to celebrate *the Passover* ; a feast to commemorate the national deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, and their safety from the destroying angel, who destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians : that, upon this occasion, a *lamb was sacrificed*, and the blood sprinkled upon different parts of the house ; in memory of the similar mark by which the Israelites were distinguished from the Egyptians, and preserved alive : that also, upon this occasion, parts of the victim, with bread and wine, were partaken in common by those who shared in the sacrifice ; as was usual in most of their sacrificial ceremonies ; with suitable blessings and thanksgivings for the mercies recorded or expected.

During this feast, our Saviour “took bread ; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said ; take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you ; this do, in remembrance of me ¹.”

It is, then, as if He had said ; ‘ ye are assembled to celebrate in this feast your deliverance from the destroying angel, and from Egyptian bondage. Henceforth *observe the feast*, (‘ Do this’) not for this purpose, but “in remembrance of me,” in remembrance of the salvation I work for you—to celebrate your greater deliverance from sin and from death. The lamb was originally slain that, by its blood, ye might be marked for safety from the sword of the angel ; and ye since slay it, and eat it, as then, with unleavened bread, to recal that safety, and your accompanying deliverance. I am now to be slain for your salvation from sin, and

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 23.

from destruction in hell. Let this fact be now substituted in your memory ; and, to keep it there, observe this feast henceforward, ('Do this') in remembrance of such my death. No longer slay the lamb. The final aim of all sacrifices is attained. The *true Lamb*¹ is now slain *once for all*. But let my body, now broken (or sacrificed) for you, be represented to your minds by this act which I now perform for you, of breaking bread. And when ye eat the bread thus broken, do it in token of that blessing of salvation, which my body broken—my sacrifice—procures for you ; as you use, in the sacrifices of the law, to partake of the victim, in token of the good you expect to receive from them.'

Again ; " after the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying ; this cup is the ² *New*

¹ " Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, *once for all*," Heb. x. 10. " Behold the *Lamb of God* which taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29.

² By this form of expression, if we construe it

Testament in my blood. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

These are the words, as given by St. Paul. St. Matthew varies the expression a little, and gives it somewhat more fulness, but conveys the same meaning. "Drink ye all of it; for this is *my blood* of the *New Testament*, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins ¹."

literally, the *cup* would represent the *new covenant* or *testament*. Though the meaning of our Saviour is perhaps more clearly conveyed in the words of St. Matthew, yet the difference which the Evangelist and Apostle allow themselves in the form of expression, shews that neither of them is to be interpreted *literally* or closely, but *both* in the way of allusion; in which case their words agree in meaning.

It is clear that since no surprise was expressed by the Apostles when they were now told that the *cup* was *blood*, they understood it to be only in a representative or figurative sense: since to taste blood, even of animals, was an abomination to them. When they misunderstood a similar expression, and took it literally, they *were* shocked, and our Saviour explained to them that He was to be understood as speaking figuratively. In *that* case, He meant by His blood—His *doctrines*. See John vi. 54. 60. 63.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 27.

In one instance, the expression is, “the *New Testament in my blood* ;” in the other, *my blood of the New Testament*. They have clearly the same purport, and are in allusion to the blood of the covenant made through Moses—the *Old Covenant* or Testament. “And Moses¹ took half of the blood, and put it in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people. And they said ; all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and *sprinkled*² it on the people,

¹ Exod. xxiv. 6, &c.

² It may not be foreign to the purpose to remark, that after the sprinkling of the people with the blood of the covenant, Moses, and Aaron, and Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders who went before God to represent the people at the delivery of the first covenant, *ate and drank* in the presence of God. “They saw God, and did eat and drink,” (Exod. xxiv. 11). This is another instance of the selection of these as significant actions, on occasions of great religious solemnities. However familiar these actions may be,

and said; behold the *blood of the covenant*, which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words." A covenant, this was, to bless them with prosperity and happiness, while they should obey His words, and to punish them, when they transgressed them. In alluding, then, to the ratification of this covenant by blood, our Saviour seems to say; 'this cup represents the blood of me, the victim sacrificed to make binding the *new covenant (or testament)* which God now makes with you; a *covenant of mercy*—to save you from the death eternal due to your sins, and give you everlasting life—if you, on your part, will hearken to my instructions, and

if we reflect that they are the means by which food is converted to the sustenance of life, we shall see of how much and important meaning they might be naturally made the signs, in an age of the world when, from the simple state of manners, almost all important transactions were, for the purpose of impression upon the mind and memory, accompanied by some external significant action.

rely upon my promises. Trust to this covenant; it is the blood of me, the only Son of God, which is shed to ratify it, and to obtain for all who believe and obey me, the remission of their sins. "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it (the *cup*—the *wine*—not the *blood*) in remembrance of me." Drink the wine, in remembrance of this shedding of my blood to ratify the covenant, and in token of your being parties to it, and entitled to the benefits of it. But remember, it is *a covenant* which is ratified; a covenant, as the first, embracing mutual ¹ obligations; of mercy on the part of God;

¹ "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will *put my laws into their hearts*, and in their minds will I write them, and *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*" Heb. x. 16. (Quoted from Jerem. xxxi. 33, 34). *A moral improvement on the part of man is to accompany remission of sins, under the new covenant ratified by our Saviour.* It is spoken of as the result of God's agency; as every thing is, evil often as well as good, under the Mosaic dispensation.

of faith and obedience *on the part of man.*'

It is seen, then, that the whole of this ceremony is emblematic, imitative. The body of our Saviour is not now broken, nor His blood shed. He is not again sacrificed. He was sacrificed "*once for all.*" It is bread which is broken; it is wine which is poured out. And this is done, to represent to our minds, in a more lively manner, the breaking His body, the shedding His blood, upon the cross. So it is not His body which we eat, nor His blood which we drink. But the bread which has been broken to represent the breaking His body, is now eaten, to represent that eating of the body of the victim, which was usual at the Jewish sacrifices. And as the eating of the victim on those occasions denoted, that he who ate had a share in the blessing of the sacrifice; so here, the eating the bread, which represents the body of

our great victim, denotes the blessing of salvation to belong to us, through His sacrifice.

The blood of the victim was not drunk upon any occasion. It was an abomination to the Jews to taste blood. But the blood was employed in most significant parts of their ceremonies. Either the persons on whose behalf the sacrifice was made, or their houses, were marked with the blood, to entitle them to the benefit of the sacrifice : whether it was to cleanse¹ them from pollution, or to save² them from danger, or to bind³ them as parties to a covenant, and as sharers of its privileges. We *drink* the wine, appointed to represent the blood, since it is wine and not blood ; adopting the action suited to its own nature, rather than that belonging to the nature of what it represents. And

¹ Levit. xiv. 14.

² Exod. xii. 7. 13.

³ Exod. xxiv. 8.

we do it, to denote the similar blessings which we derive from *the blood of our victim*, of which it is the substitute.

In *no*¹ sense, then, do we eat flesh,

¹ How is this assertion reconciled with the passage in the Exhortation, in the Communion Service? "We *spiritually* eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood." The sound only is at variance with me, not the sense. To do a thing *spiritually*, means that the *spirit* or *soul* is the subject of the action; as when we are said to do a thing *bodily*, it is intended that the body is exclusively the agent.

The expression, therefore, is the same as if it had been said, *the "soul eats,"* &c. But eating is not a function of the soul, and the term is only applied to the soul, in the way of *figure*: as when we talk of the mind's *imbibing* or *drinking* knowledge—or of our *digesting* the Scriptures—(mark, learn, and inwardly *digest* them)—we do not mean that the immaterial part of man has the same functions as the body, or even any that resemble those of the body. But when the immaterial part receives a result bearing some sort of comparison with the result to the body from eating and drinking its food, viz. health and life; we, consistently with the usual forms of language, apply the term expressive of the mode by which the body receives the result, also to the soul. And the more readily in the above instance, because the elements which are food to the body, *represent* here the source from which the soul derives its good.

The thing intended to be asserted is, that while the

or drink blood ; but only bread and wine appointed to represent them.

body receives sustenance from bread and wine, the soul derives pardon and life from the body and blood of Christ, which the bread and wine represent; not from eating and drinking them; the comparison is only of the two *results*, not of the *manner of receiving* them. Life is imparted to the body from bread and wine (by eating and drinking them). Life (eternal) is at the same time imparted to the soul (*i. e.* the assurance of it *now*) from the body and blood of Christ (from their being broken and shed—from His propitiatory sacrifice.) That the expression is merely figurative, is shewn by the words which follow—“then we *dwell in Christ*, and *Christ in us*.”

So in the expression in the Catechism—“the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken;” the meaning is, that “the *benefit* of His body and blood is *verily and indeed received*”—(the cause being put for the effect—a common figure). It has been expressly asserted just before, that the material substances—the external part of the Sacrament—are bread and wine. It is now meant to assert, that also a spiritual grace or benefit—a pardon to the soul—is verily and indeed taken from the body and blood of Christ, at the same time.

We have elsewhere the comparison more pointedly drawn. The benefit of the Sacrament is said to be “the strengthening and refreshing of *our souls* by the body and blood of Christ, *as* our bodies are (strengthened) by bread and wine.” The word “*as*” clearly compares only the two *results*, not the *manner of re-*

That such is the real nature of this ceremony ; that it is intended to *commemorate by a resemblance* ; to be a *sign—a sacrament* ; is proved by the words with which St. Paul closes the history of its institution : “¹ for as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do *shew* (represent) *the Lord’s death*.” And He points out to those whom he had been reproofing for having made of this feast an occasion of excess,

ceiving them. Both soul and body are *strengthened*—one by the body of Christ—by its sacrifice ; the other by bread and wine—by eating and drinking.

It must, however, be owned, that while the expressions employed well represent, when properly explained, the simple notions of the Church of England respecting this sacrament, they may bear a mystic sense to those whose views of this rite require it. This ambiguity is not, perhaps, altogether accidental. It was the object of those who drew up the Liturgy to make it suit the opinions of as many Christians as could use the same form of words, without a compromise of principle in essential doctrines. And they sometimes, therefore, employed terms which might represent the meaning of persons who did not, in fact, quite think alike. Each would take them in his own sense.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

and lost all recollection of its holy significancy, the great sin they had committed “in not discerning the Lord’s body¹,” in not adverting to that great sacrifice, which the ceremony was intended to represent to their minds, but eating and drinking as at a common feast.

But while the rite is thus sacramental—imitative of the holy event to be commemorated; the *object* of it is simply, *to commemorate Christ’s sacrifice*, or death, for us. Both on delivering the bread and the cup, “*Do this in remembrance of me*” (in remembrance of what I now suffer for your salvation,) is His sole and limited injunction².

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

² The end proposed by this institution is thus expressed in our Catechism. “Why was the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper ordained? For a *perpetual remembrance* of the *sacrifice* of the *death* of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.” Agreeably to this view, we read in the Exhortation in the Communion Service,—“And to the end that

Now whatever is enjoined by God to man, is enjoined for the good of man. In seeking to keep this event before our minds, the object of our Saviour is to call forth and preserve in our hearts sentiments and resolutions suitable to the event, and necessary to qualify us for receiving the benefits of it. The death of Christ does not effect the salvation of man, simply, directly, by necessary consequence. Otherwise it were unimportant that man should remember, or even be at all acquainted with it. This great good to man must still, in some sense¹, be

we should *always remember* the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He hath obtained to us; He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a *continual remembrance*," &c. And again, in the prayer of Consecration, "receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, &c. *in remembrance of His death* and passion." Again—"to be by them received *in remembrance* of His meritorious cross and passion."

¹ "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith* in His blood." (Rom. iii. 25.) Now

wrought out through his own nature. It is to carry on this work ; to make the death of Christ available to man, by engendering in his heart such persevering reliance on the merits and promises of Christ, and such corresponding holiness of will and conduct, as may fit him for that happiness in heaven which is included in the term salvation, that the remembrance of His death is commanded. Let us consider in what manner it peculiarly tends to this end ; what dispositions it is properly calculated to promote in us.

Two principal considerations force themselves upon the mind through contemplation of the death of Christ.

First, *the lost condition of man in his natural state.*

If the death of the Son of God was

faith, in whatever it consist, is at least in the faculties and feelings of man. The effect wrought for us by Christ is not absolute, irrespective, unconditional.

necessary to reconcile man to God, man must have been entirely alienated from God ; unfit for His presence ; unequal by his own powers to recover God's favour ; shut out from all hope and possibility of eternal happiness.

And who is there that does not, in the corruption of his heart, find a lamentable confirmation of this sad picture ? Who is there, however high he may hold his head among men, but feels, when approaching, in thought only, the presence of God, (even under our inadequate conception of His lofty attributes) man's total unfitness to please Him ; the impossibility that his low, gross, selfish, violent nature, his lukewarm devotion to, and love of, His exalted perfections, can be acceptable to Him, or *suited to find happiness in His presence ?*

From this consideration there should naturally result corresponding feelings and purposes.

Humility—a hearty consciousness

of our vileness ; contrition—an afflicting sorrow for, and hatred of sin ; and with these, an earnest desire and resolution to cultivate new dispositions and adopt new habits.

And we shall perceive, that in order to attempt this change ; to attempt this, I say—not only in order to accomplish it—but to attempt this with any sincerity and reasonableness, a minute investigation¹ into our previous character ; our temper ; our habits of life, of thought, of conversation, of conduct, in all our relations, is necessary ; with a determination to abandon, with unflinching firmness, whatever is found contrary to the laws of God.

We shall straightway set about re-

¹ The propriety of previous self-examination is thus easily deduced from the nature and end of the institution. There is no passage of Scripture expressly requiring it. The passage quoted for this purpose (1 Cor. xi. 28.) has been misunderstood. See Balguy's Charges, p. 315.

conciling¹ animosities; relinquishing dishonest gains; abandoning all unchaste and sinful indulgences; correcting our tempers; guarding our language; husbanding our time, and living as persons conscious of living for some high end.

We shall be led to reflect, that since in our present nature we are so faulty, it must be by aid of something beyond our nature, that we can alone hope to accomplish its amelioration.

We shall see, therefore, the necessity of prayer to God to co-operate with us; to grant us the blessing of His Holy Spirit, to cleanse our hearts;

¹ As the forgiveness and love of our fellow-creatures is constantly urged upon us in Scripture from the consideration of God's forgiveness and love of us, it should be our especial care, when we are celebrating this greatest instance of the exercise of these attributes in God, to practise and cultivate them in ourselves. Accordingly, beneficence and pardon of injuries have ever been considered as appropriate, essential accompaniments of this rite.

to enlighten our judgments ; to invigorate our purposes.

We shall carefully avoid all occasions of sin ; seek every help to piety ; attend all the refreshing ordinances of religion.

The second consideration is, *that Christ by His atonement—by His death on our behalf—has reconciled us to God.*

And can we advert to this fact ; can we seriously believe, that whereas we were lost, we are now saved ; that instead of being everlastingly and necessarily shut out from heaven, we now have access to it, may be partakers of eternal happiness : can we believe this, and think of it, and not feel gratitude to the Authors of this blessed change ; to Christ for suffering, in order to reconcile us to God ; to God for condescending, in any way, to be reconciled to us ? The magnitude of the price of atonement must shew us the enormity of our offence, the necessity and difficulty of reconciliation,

and quicken our sentiments of obligation and love.

But if this love be sincere, it must produce effects in us. It will not be inoperative. We shall be anxious to please God—to obey Him. We shall occupy ourselves with His word and works. We shall love His ordinances; seek to them as privileges; rejoice in them as being, what in fact they are, merciful prescriptions to improve and perfect man's nature—to qualify him for the happiness now made accessible to him; not regard them as dull and tiresome services, merely exacted to magnify the power of God.

The general result of these views and feelings will be that sentiment of *faith*, which is the indispensable requisite on our part to render the sacrifice of Christ available to us—the great obligation of man in the *new covenant*, without which the covenant is to him void and valueless. It is written, that God hath “set Christ

forth to be a *propitiation* ;” but how ?
 “ through *faith in His blood*.”

Let us not, however, be run away with by a word. What is intended by it in the Scriptures ? Look to the list of examples of it in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews. Compare them with the strong requirements of *reliance upon God*, and *holiness of life*, in order to salvation, every where enforced upon us by our Saviour and His Apostles ; and you will see that *faith* implies nothing less than *submission to the trials—resistance to the temptations—and fulfilment of the duties of this life, in the full persuasion of eternal happiness, through the death of Christ*. It is a reception of the doctrines of Christ, not merely to the understanding, but to the heart ; not a mere acquiescence of the intellect, but of the will ; *persevering obedience to all the commandments of Christ, in reliance upon the fulfilment of His promises*.

These are the effects which the consideration of the death of Christ, if continually present to the mind, is calculated to produce. Not that a single contemplation of it will accomplish all this. Man is never brought to a permanent course of feeling or conduct, by a single thought or impulse. It is constant, persevering reflection that progressively moulds the character. And it is the object of this rite, repeated at suitable intervals, to keep alive such continued impression of the death of Christ, as may work a gradual, but complete and abiding renewal of the heart.

But while such is the merciful aim of this commanded remembrance of Christ's death, is there any thing in it distinct and differing from the whole body of His instructions? There is no new duty imposed by participating in this sacrament, but new facility acquired in the discharge of our existing duties. The same obligations had

been in force, the same virtues had been necessary to salvation, if this rite had never been instituted. He who obeys this commandment of his Saviour, and he who neglects it, have the same course to run ; only the one runs with increased advantage. It is a wise provision of a benevolent Saviour, zealous that we should apply His merits to ourselves ; it is His wise provision against the negligence and indifference of man. We need not shrink from this rite, fearful that it imposes straiter ties upon us. With it, or without it, there is but one mode of salvation ; but one road to heaven. This helps us on our way. If we mean to be saved ; if we have any care or concern about salvation ; then there is ample reason to resort to this rite—none to decline it. If we dare not come to it, we may well fear to come to church. We come there to the same end. All the same feelings are due upon our entrance at

the gate of the temple, as upon our approach to the altar. It is the dispensation of Christ we come to acknowledge. We come, in His name, to deplore our sinfulness; to purpose and promise amendment; to solicit aid from heaven to further it; to profess our faith in the merits of Christ, through which alone we look for the means of grace, and on which we build the hope of glory. All this is the business of the ordinary¹ service of the Church. It is this only that is the service of the altar. It is a total inconsistency, an entire misunderstanding, or an unseemly contempt of the commandment of Christ, to choose the one service and reject the other. It is as though we said to Christ, we will have you save us, but will not allow you to teach us the way to be

¹ Look only at the Litany. How much, too, of the meaning of the Sacrament is implied in the single supplication, "*O Lamb of God*," &c.—Thou victim provided by God to atone for the sins of man.

saved. To stay away from fear, is to incur the evil we would shun. It is sinning, to avoid sin.

It may naturally be asked ; if this be the case, how happens it that so many, so very many, even of persons who attend the other ordinances of religion, fall into this error? There should be some special cause for a fault so common. I believe it to be found in a great misapprehension of the nature of the rite ; an exaggerated estimate of the qualifications requisite to partake of it properly—of the danger of doing so without them—and also of the immediate benefits which follow from it.

Comments and devotional accompaniments to this rite concur in refining and exaggerating, I had almost said, *mystifying* it. And our catechism and communion service are not quite faultless in this respect. I venture to express this opinion, because I have seldom heard a sermon per-

suasive of communion, which did not partially explain away the language employed ; which seems an admission that it is in some respects injudicious, at least ; that in its ordinary acceptation it conveys too strong an impression. It is not, perhaps, difficult to account for this, in some measure. In the dark ages which soon succeeded the establishment of Christianity, reason declined, and passion and feeling acquired proportionate sway. This ceremony, justly affecting in its true nature, furnished a ready field for their exercise. By degrees the doctrine of transubstantiation was invented and established. Instead of the simple ceremony to picture forth by signs, and thus impress upon the memory, the death of Christ ; the notion was conceived and embraced of the miraculous conversion of the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ, that He is actually sacrificed and

taken by each communicant, upon every occasion of this rite—that the Saviour Himself is personally and wholly present in each consecrated wafer or morsel of bread. It was natural to exalt, at the same time, the preparation requisite for, and the spiritual benefits following this awful exhibition of the divine power and person. Exaggeration was necessary. One error entailed others. We have rejected the original error. We have discarded the notion of a corporeal presence, and reduced the meaning of the ceremony to its symbolical character. But we have been less careful to lower to a corresponding tone the accompanying language. We still retain expressions beyond the sense of Scripture. This was natural under the circumstances of the Reformation. The mind does not, in receding from error, at once reach and remain at the point of truth. The cautious change slowly, and step by

step: the zealous overleap the boundary. Hence we find in some distinguished leaders of the Reformation, frequent changes of opinion¹; a progress towards truth. Besides, all did not advance with equal step. Hence, to embrace as many as possible in a common church, liturgies and articles of faith were drawn up with some vagueness and variety of expression; so as to lead, perhaps, to some inconsistency. Too much reference was made to what *had been* believed, rather than to what *ought to be* believed. The doctrine is not laid down with that simplicity which would be observed, if it were sought simply from Scripture.

Thus, in speaking of the spiritual

¹ This is objected to the Reformers by Bossuet and other defenders of papal infallibility. But it was the natural result to minds escaping from a system in which many errors are mixed up with much truth, and the whole of which had been the object of early and long veneration.

assistance to follow from this rite, we perhaps exalt it too much beyond the ordinary consequence of any act of pure devotion, without sufficient warranty of holy writ. That the blessing of God's aid will undoubtedly follow every sincere and hearty application for it, is the clear promise of Christ himself. That it will, therefore, most assuredly attach to this highest act of worship, cannot for a moment be doubted. But there is no ground for making a marked distinction between the results of this and other devotional services. And the consequence of doing so is, that they who are taught to join in this rite with these expectations, and find not corresponding emotions or impulses of spiritual aid, are driven to impute the failure to their own unworthiness, and are disheartened and frightened. They abstain from the rite, under an apprehension of unfitness for it.

In the representation of the danger

attending the unworthy participation in this rite, it might seem more bold to question the propriety of the language employed, since it is the language of the Apostle. But still it is true that the language of the Apostle is so employed, as to lead to a misapprehension of his meaning. The words are the words of the Apostle ; but the circumstances to which they are applied in our communion service are not the circumstances to which the Apostle applies them ; and as the circumstances make a part of the meaning, the meaning is not the meaning of the Apostle, and may, therefore, be impugned with less scruple. Let us see how the case stands.

Though this solemnity was enjoined by Christ, and immediately and universally adopted by His Apostles and all Christians, no details in the mode of celebrating it were prescribed ; nothing beyond the breaking and eating bread, and drinking wine, in com-

munion (together.) The rest was left to the varying circumstances and feelings of mankind. Now the early Christians, who lived much in common, the richer often sharing their substance with their poorer brethren, (which in a small community, under a strong and common religious excitement, and under a common persecution, was more practicable than in after times) used to celebrate this rite at a meal partaken in common, nearly resembling the circumstances of its first institution by our Saviour with the twelve. By degrees, as the numbers increased, abuses arose, to which such a custom was obviously liable. ¹The religious character of the meeting was forgotten. Festivity and excess were allowed to profane so sacred a ceremony. Drunkenness, and its natural consequence, quarrels, arose. There was no longer a charit-

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 18. et seq.

able equality. The richer reserved to themselves the better viands, and the poorer went without. "One was hungry and another drunken." We are readily shocked at such a representation. We shrink with horror from the idea of approaching God, to commemorate the death of His Son to redeem mankind from sin, in a state of inebriety. It was to mock and insult God, as it were, to His face. Such conduct was not too forcibly described by the Apostle, as "being guilty of the body and blood of Christ;" as wantonly committing heinous sin, which made His sacrifice necessary; as doing that which was the cause of His death; "crucifying the Son of God afresh" (as is said of sin, in another place). The Apostle denounces strongly such proceedings, and threatens them with the wrath of God; declares that they who *thus* eat and drink, "eat and drink to themselves damnation." We might in such

circumstances receive this language in its highest sense. But it is generally understood that the word *damnation* is here employed in its narrower signification, of condemnation to *temporal* inflictions. To these, it may be remembered, as following their ordinary transgressions, the Jews were well accustomed. It had been long the mode of God's peculiar government of them. And we can hardly dispute that, even now, temporal affliction does occasionally attend open impiety, as its punishment. This construction of the word damnation is confirmed by the Apostle's appeal to the consequences he was threatening, as having been already realized. "For this cause some are *sickly* among you, and some have *fallen asleep*" (died). But, were we to understand by *damnation* a higher denouncement, it would hardly affect us with surprise, if *any* profaneness, if *any* sin and defiance of God, be thought to merit it. But we

must appropriate it, in whichever sense, to the offence to which the Apostle threatens it. If we attach it to a lesser fault, we go beyond Scripture. We use the Apostle's words indeed, but not his meaning. The Apostle calls such conduct as we have been describing, eating and drinking unworthily. If we call something other than this, "to eat and drink unworthily," the Apostle's words do not apply to our offence; at least not upon his authority; only upon ours. If we draw up a list of the qualifications suitable and desirable upon approaching God in this religious rite—suitable and desirable upon approaching Him in *any* act of worship—and say that to have these is to approach Him *worthily*: if we then read the Apostle's threats to those who eat and drink *unworthily*; we connect these threats with any deficiency in these qualifications, and we induce a fearful error. We make ourselves judges.

We read condemnation to faults to which the Apostle did not extend it. We misrepresent his meaning, though we retain his words. And it is his meaning with which we are concerned.

When we are representing the proper qualifications for presenting ourselves to God, we dare not stop short of perfection. We dare not allow *any* sin : we dare not, while *any* sinfulness remains, say that a man is worthy to appear before God. Any deficiency from perfection is therefore unworthiness. Hence we are all made to declare, in the communion service, that we are "unworthy to gather up so much as the crumbs which fall from His table." But do we thereby intend that we all receive the sacrament, the food of that table, unworthily, in the sense of the Apostle ; so as "to eat and drink to ourselves damnation?" This would be to attach to *every* degree of unworthiness, that which the Apostle only applied to the *greatest*

degree of it ; to the gross and horrible impiety above described. The crime which he denounced, was the “ not discerning the Lord’s body ;” eating and drinking to excess, as at a common and riotous feast, totally unmindful of the religious character of the ceremony. If this be not our offence, it is clear that we have no need to apply to ourselves the punishment threatened, upon the authority of this passage. And there is no similar one. We may certainly offend against decency and propriety in this solemnity in other ways ; but we must ascertain our offence, and its degree of guilt, from general considerations, as with respect to other acts of profaneness.

It is one thing, I must repeat, to draw a picture of all the good dispositions to be constantly aimed at in our Christian career, and all the right affections to be cultivated in order to our worthily presenting ourselves to God ; and another to represent the

degree of them, without which we may not come to Him at all, without offence to Him. The smallest amount, if sincerely felt, is sufficient for addressing ourselves to Him. Christianity, in the heart of each individual, is progressive from small beginnings, and is to be advanced by prayer. If, then, a great perfection is to be attained before we may come with our supplications to God, the end must be accomplished before we may resort to the means of accomplishing it.

It is thus with the sacrament. *Some* faith in the efficacy of Christ's death, *some* sense of sin, *some* sorrow, *some* purpose of amendment, *some* conviction of the necessity of the Divine aid, *some* feeling of gratitude to God, and to our Saviour, are necessary to our right presentment of ourselves at the altar. With the beginnings of these, and with a sincere desire of their increase, with no allowed retention of any known sin, we may come to the

altar ; we are invited to do so ; we are commanded.

I would not have a person come to the sacrament with indifference and carelessness. But neither would I have him so come to church. He comes thither to the presence of God, to ask mercy in the name of his Saviour ; to confess his faith in the merits of His death ; to do all which is done in the sacrament, in a different form. If he is careless and inattentive, it is unbecoming mockery of his Maker. It is no more in the other case.

I would shrink from the folly and sin of depreciating any real spiritual danger below the scriptural measure of it, in the hope of some fancied good. But timid minds require to be encouraged, if through man's teaching they have raised the meaning of Scripture beyond that of inspiration, to do their duty in sinking to the truth. Error lies in going beyond Scripture, as certainly

as in falling short of it. They lower the meaning once attached to Scripture, in rejecting the doctrine of the real presence; a sublime and touching doctrine—calculated to inspire high devotional feeling—if true (for I am not one of those who treat this doctrine with ridicule¹, as absurd. I only reject it as unfounded.) Let them not, then, fear to search the Scriptures, and see if some of the exaggerations invented to suit the ceremony to this doctrine, have not been retained, and require to be pruned. The ceremony will be solemn and affecting enough, in its simple truth.

With respect to the benefits to be expected by the communicant, it is only necessary to look to the views and impressions which the contemplation of the death of Christ is cal-

¹ As Dr. Middleton (Pref. to his Letter from Rome); "It seems too absurd a thing even for Heathens to worship that which they eat."

culated to originate in the mind. If the communicant come not wholly unprepared and indifferent, and continue so through the ceremony ; if it be to him a ceremony of any meaning (and if it be not, he cannot reasonably expect any benefit, any more than from entering the walls of a church, with his whole mind occupied with things extrinsic to his duty there) then it is impossible but that some help should be derived to him in his Christian warfare. Single impressions will leave no permanent trace. But by frequent renewal, they will stamp a fixed character on his heart, and come to influence his will, his conduct, and his affections : just as any other thoughts, good or evil, take no root from a single presentment to the mind, but only after frequent recurrence. This arises from the natural constitution of man's mind : and it was from its adaptation to this natural constitution, that our Saviour be-

nigmantly and wisely prescribed this commemorative rite. If, on each occasion of our celebrating it, our minds are steadily directed to the lost state of man, without Christ's sacrifice; to the blessed state to which we are restored by that event: if we feel humble and contrite; anxious for the renewal of our hearts, and amendment of our lives; sensible of our insufficiency to effect this ourselves, and devoutly solicitous for the aid of God in the great task; then will these impressions tend to realize our holy desires; partly by that natural strength which is acquired to all our feelings on each occasion of their excitement; partly by the aid of God, which is promised to this as to every act of devotion. It is the undoubted promise of God, that prayer shall be successful; that to a reasonable and faithful supplication for *temporal* blessings, so much is conceded as is consistent with our higher in-

terests ; and that to persevering and earnest petitions for *spiritual* blessings, His ear will be never closed. We cannot indeed distinguish the interference of His power, since He employs ordinary circumstances to bring about His ends. Yet they who have been honest and zealous in their efforts to improve in piety, and in their prayers to God to aid them, will probably be conscious of some holy suggestions, of some happy impressions, which they find a difficulty in tracing to their own powers. But we must not, if sensible of no distinct influence of the divine Spirit ; we must not yet infer that we have not been listened to. God worketh in us secretly. If we advance in piety, we may regard this a sure proof that our prayers have been successful. If our spiritual life has been maintained, and in some progress, we may as confidently rest assured that God's hand is at work in us, as we may,

and must impute to Him the preservation of our natural life. We may discern His power in the aspirations of piety, as surely as in the play of the lungs. It cannot be doubted that, if to no prayer, and especially for spiritual aid, He is ever deaf; to this more sublime act of devotion, in conformity to the commandment of His Son, and commemorative of His death for man, He will be especially attentive; that to this more exalted service, a more bountiful measure of the Spirit will be accorded.

It may be well to say a word as to the frequency with which it is incumbent on us to join in this ceremony¹. Nothing is prescribed in Scripture on this point. Every one seems left to adopt the course most suitable to his temper and spiritual condition. The aim should be, perhaps, to render

¹ The custom of daily communion alluded to in *Acts* ii. 46, appears, however, to have subsisted for some time in the Church.

this a more awakening and impressive rite than the ordinary service of the Church; that, whereas man has a tendency to sink into formality, under the frequent repetition of any impression, however natural and solemn; *this* should be made to recur at such intervals as to rouse him from his lethargy. It should be resorted to so often as to sustain a permanent feeling; to keep alive in the heart a constant sensibility to the great sacrifice it commemorates; not so often as to become unmoving and ineffectual. I should say, that while to the established Christian, it can hardly at any time take him unprepared, or come unwelcome or unuseful; new converts to a religious life rather *require* it frequently: that they in whose hearts the world and religion are still struggling with each other; God and Satan still striving for the mastery; these want their wholesome impressions to be more frequently revived.

With them, the stream is adverse; the stroke must be more frequent, to make progress. Only, in no case, let it be repeated oftener than is required to ensure reasonable advancement; lest the strength be exhausted; lest weariness and languor come over the Christian principle, yet feeble in the heart.

Are these things so, and yet so little heeded? Can we seriously believe that God stands in these *present* relations to us, of Creator and daily Preserver and Redeemer, and yet be satisfied to overlook completely the obligations which they impose on us; the feelings of which they render Him the just object? Can we be persuaded that He *will be* one day our *Judge*, when a new existence, without end, will be assigned us by Him, wherein our condition will depend on

the degree in which our lives here have been regulated, and our hearts disciplined by the lessons He has taught us; and yet live on, day after day, without adverting to them? It is clear to reason, that if this life be merely a preparatory state for another, then all that makes this life what it is—all its daily business—all that is more particularly considered *worldly*, of its occupation; must be intended to promote, in some way, this end; must be capable, if rightly understood and used, of advancing this preparation—of fitting us for a future existence. He who appointed the object of life, appointed also the circumstances of life: and we may, therefore, be sure that the circumstances are suited to promote the object. The pursuit, however, of this consideration, would carry us from our present subject. But if we overlook this high use of the more worldly part of our occupation, surely we can-

not think that we answer any portion of the purpose of existence, unless we attend constantly, and upon system, to the duties *immediately religious*, and comply with the sacred ordinances prescribed by God. If any day is allowed to pass without devotional observance—without the training of our hearts to dispositions suggested by the contemplation of God, by reflection on the doctrines He has revealed, and by exercises of piety; that day must, to say the least of it, be lost to the great end for which we live. And if many days glide away in such heedlessness of our religious obligations, into how small a space will our life shrink (however long by measurement of years) when that part of it alone comes to be taken into account, which will have value and useful influence on our condition in futurity. He cannot be a wise man, however intellectual his pursuits, who allows himself to be wholly engrossed

by objects foreign to the only purpose for which he was made to live at all ; the only one which can advance his permanent well-being. His relations to God make the counsels he has received from God for his good, the proper subject of study ; and the ends proposed in those counsels, the proper ends of pursuit. On these it is the part of a wise man to employ his thoughts—by these to regulate his life.

Surely it is our business, if we make any pretension to govern our conduct by the dictates of that reason upon which we pride ourselves, to come to some certain decision upon the fact of our several relations to God, and upon the truth of revealed religion ; and to live correspondingly. If we convince ourselves—if we feel perfectly satisfied that these things have no reality—then to discard them from all our thoughts and conduct, satisfactorily and upon system, as completely as is

now done by mere negligence and indifference. But if our conclusion is that these things are certainly real, or even that they have some reasonable probability; then our wisdom must be *to live to them*; to study the directions of God for attaining eternal happiness; to use assiduously the light He has graciously afforded us for acquiring the *necessary qualifications*. It cannot be indifferent whether we comply with His lessons or not. God would not interfere to give us useless admonitions, or to prescribe unimportant institutions. Whatever He ordained, must be ordained for high and valuable ends—for ends high and valuable for *us*. *We* are the objects of His instructions: *our* good is proposed in them. It is to *our* nature they are adapted—not to that of God. We should thankfully embrace them, and anxiously co-operate with our great Parent in preparing ourselves for happiness in His presence; for happiness which

must be founded upon our *previous fitness*, in some degree, for His presence; upon our fitness to receive happiness from it; upon some approximation, then, to His nature, in the dispositions of our heart. This approximation can only be sought, with reasonable hope of success, by diligent study of the lessons He has inculcated for this end; by *faith in the doctrines He has revealed; and by compliance with the institutions He has ordained.*

THE END.

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